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Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the situation in the Central African Republic pursuant to the statement by the President

I. Introduction

1. In the statement by its President dated 17 July 2001 (S/PRST/2001/18), the Security Council requested me to submit to it by 30 September 2001 recommendations on how the United Nations might further contribute to the economic recovery of the Central African Republic and to the strengthening of the role of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), particularly in the areas of the judicial system, institution-building, enhancing the effectiveness of its early-warning capabilities and human rights. This report is submitted pursuant to that request.

II. Background

2. In my third report to the Security Council on the situation in the Central African Republic, dated 2 July 2001 (S/2001/660), I stressed that the attempted coup d'état of 28 May 2001 had seriously destabilized the political, economic, social and security situation in the Central African Republic. It has also seriously jeopardized the international community's efforts to restore and consolidate peace in the Central African Republic. The country is now in a situation of crisis that requires immediate and increased levels of external assistance.

3. The Government of the Central African Republic conveyed this message to General Lamine Cissé, my new Representative in the Central African Republic and Head of BONUCA. Upon assuming his functions, my Representative and Special Envoy to the Central African Republic, General Amadou Toumani Touré, confirmed the seriousness of the current situation.

4. The situation in the Central African Republic since the failed coup attempt has been marked by sharp political tensions, further economic decline, simmering social tension and a troubling lack of security. One of the consequences of the failed coup, for which the leader of the main opposition party claimed responsibility, is that political dialogue no longer seems to be on the agenda. The repercussions of the fighting in the capital have been disastrous for the economy, which, since mid-August, has suffered from the World Bank's suspension of disbursements for non-payment of amounts due. As a result of these financial difficulties, the State is unable to pay the salaries of its public servants on a regular basis. Lastly, in the area of security, the flight to the Democratic Republic of the Congo of the chief instigators of the coup attempt and a large number of soldiers poses a serious threat to peace and stability in the country. This fear is all the more justified as these rebel forces will not hesitate to manipulate the civilian populations which, out of fear, have taken refuge on the other side of the border.

5. It is for this reason that any solution to the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo must take into account the situation in the Central African Republic. Because of its strategic geographic situation, the Central African Republic's stability is threatened by the proliferation of weapons in the subregion and in areas adjacent to the region of Equateur that are under the control of the Front de libération des Congolais (FLC) of Mr. Jean-Pierre Bemba.

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6. The refugee problem is another illustration of the close connection between the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the situation in the Central African Republic. While large numbers of refugees from Chad, the Congo (the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of the Congo), Rwanda and the Sudan have long been present in the Central African Republic, there are now refugees from the Central African Republic in the Republic of the Congo (1,250 at Betou) and many more in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (approximately 20,000 at Zongo, on the opposite side of the river from Bangui). The presence of presumed putschists among the refugees is a matter of legitimate concern for the Central African authorities, who closed the common border between the two States on 17 July 2001. For all of these reasons, the problem of security in the Central African Republic should be dealt with in conjunction with the question of the restoration of peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, more generally, in the general context of stability in the subregion.

7. At the domestic level, the situation is gradually returning to normal. The investigation being undertaken by the Government into the killing of the security coordinator for the United Nations system is following its course. Also, the security guarantees given by the authorities have convinced nationals of the Central African Republic who had taken refuge in embassies (of France and the United States of America) or who were in hiding after the attempted coup d'état to come out. However, the flight of Mrs. Kolingba, on 24 August, followed by the arrest of the Minister of Defence, on 25 August, had provoked sharp tensions, which have now eased somewhat. At the political level, one of the repercussions of the attempted coup was the cabinet reshuffle that took place on 30 August. In the area of human rights, the situation is gradually improving, with a reduction in the number of exactions, reports of which had been frequent in the aftermath of the failed coup.

8. In the economic and military spheres, the Government drew up in succession an emergency humanitarian plan (estimated to cost 2.5 billion CFA francs, or approximately US$ 3.6 million), a minimum plan of action for social and economic recovery (estimated at 56 billion CFA francs, or approximately US$ 75 million) and a resettlement and assistance plan for returning refugees and displaced persons (estimated at 12 billion CFA francs, or US$ 17 million). In the social sphere, dialogue was resumed with the trade unions within the framework of the Monitoring and Arbitration Committee.

9. The response of the international community is not yet commensurate with the challenges faced by the country. While some bilateral partners, the United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations have already provided considerable support in the humanitarian field, much still remains to be done for economic recovery in the Central African Republic.

III. Recommendations

A. Assistance for economic recovery in the Central African Republic

10. The structural poverty that exists in the Central African Republic, which was exacerbated by the repercussions of the mutinies of 1996-1997 and then by the recent coup attempt, imposes a duty of solidarity on development partners and the international community. This solidarity should take the form of diversified assistance, in the short and medium terms, in the areas of human resources, training, economic assistance, security and institutional strengthening.

11. In the area of human resources, the system of governance that has existed thus far did not permit the most efficient use to be made of all the country's available skills. Moreover, the recruitment freeze necessitated by structural adjustment programmes has led to a severe shortage of managers in the public service, most of whose members are now nearing the age of retirement. This is why the Central African Republic should be provided in the medium term with support for the training of managers to fill the vacancies created by retirements. However, for the immediate future, the international community should make available to the Central African Republic the skills that it needs in the areas of public administration and finance with a view to improving the administrative and financial management of the State, whose institutional weaknesses are evident. I therefore recommend that development partners second high-level experts (administrators, economists, financial specialists, accountants) to the Government of the

Central African Republic, which stands ready to establish this partnership in support of its own efforts.

12. The purpose of these specialists in administration and finance would be to support the authorities in their efforts to restructure services, improve their performance and, in particular, to increase the revenues of the State and ensure a more effective allocation. The secondment of experts to the financial authorities, among other initiatives, should be accompanied by immediate institutional support for computerizing the various departments of the Ministry of Finance (treasury, taxes, State-owned property, customs, collections, revenue and debt services, central services). To this end, the Government has just submitted a priority request for an amount of 390 million CFA francs (approximately US$ 550,000). The computerization of the Ministry of Finance is of critical importance to the Central African Republic's goal of achieving the financial soundness that is required for it to obtain the resources it needs to ensure social peace in the country. The development partners of the Central African Republic in general and the Bretton Woods institutions in particular might wish to give favourable consideration to this request.

13. Because of the weakness of its administrative and technical institutions, the State has been unable to access the credits made available by donors. The Central African Republic still has unused credits amounting to 20 million euros (approximately US$ 16 million) from the sixth, seventh and eighth European Development Funds. The Government is therefore requesting that these credits be carried over so that some of them can be allocated to urgent and priority social expenditures. In this connection, it is encouraging to note that an agreement was reached to apply these unused credits towards the programming of the ninth European Development Fund. This programming, which has just been finalized jointly with the Government, includes the social sectors. My Representative at Bangui has indicated that the Commission is willing to strengthen its cooperation with the Central African Republic.

14. The Central African Republic has considerable economic potential which its current situation has prevented it from exploiting. It is, however, prepared to welcome all foreign investors, as the recent adoption of a new investment code by the Parliament shows. The State is also requesting its partners to provide support for the training of economic operators, in other words, entrepreneurs who can help to develop the country's mineral, forestry and agricultural resources. The Government would welcome assistance for the modernization of the agricultural sector in order to relieve overcrowding in Bangui and thus create poles of development in the country's interior. I therefore urge development partners to take advantage of these opportunities over the medium term.

15. The Central African Republic is also seeking assistance from the international community in the medium term for the implementation of its decentralization policy, especially in the form of support for the organization of local elections, which have not yet been held, despite the establishment of democracy in 1993. The advent of local democracy will increase the likelihood that the democratic process will succeed in the Central African Republic. I therefore encourage all interested countries and institutions to lend their active support to the Central African authorities in this area.

16. In the statement by its President dated 17 July 2001 (S/PRST/2001/18), the Security Council stressed the crucial importance of poverty eradication, debt payment and payment of arrears of salary for civil servants. In the current situation, the Central African Republic is utterly incapable of meeting these formidable challenges. In order to do so, it will need immediate and substantial external assistance. Its partners will have to show exceptional solicitude towards the Central African Republic. Echoing the very timely appeal made by the Security Council, I encourage the Bretton Woods institutions to take into account the specific nature of the case of the Central African Republic in the negotiations and implementation of programmes with the Government, which has committed itself to strict and effective economic and financial management and to the implementation of the necessary structural reforms.

17. Security is another priority area in the assistance to the Central African Republic in its recovery efforts. The attempted coup d'état increased insecurity in the country. The number of illegally owned weapons — the collection of which was far from being completed when the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) ended — has increased sharply as a result of the events of 28 May. There is now such a proliferation of light weapons in Bangui and in the provinces that incidents of armed robbery in the capital and attacks on the highways in the interior

of the country are more frequent. In order to ensure that security and peace are restored in the Central African Republic, it is absolutely essential to assist the Government in its efforts to collect arms and to implement its redeployment plan. I invite the different partners to assist the State agencies responsible for disarmament, whose performance has been far from effective due to a lack of resources. Such assistance could take the form of:

(a) Financial assistance to compensate owners of illegal weapons;

(b) Provision of experts in disarmament;

(c) Assistance for the redeployment plan.

18. Assistance to the Central African Republic in the area of security also encompasses the restructuring of the defence and security forces. The appointment of a Minister responsible for restructuring following the cabinet reshuffle of 30 August 2001 underlines the priority that the authorities assign to this question. It should be recalled that not all the pledges made at the special donor meeting in New York in May 2000 have been honoured. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those States that have already fulfilled their commitments. Like the Security Council, I call upon the other partners who had made similar commitments to honour them. The situation in the Central African Republic calls for the continued and improved restructuring of the armed forces in order to create a climate that would enable them to fulfil their role under the Constitution of the Republic and to promote the establishment of lasting peace in the country. Bilateral and multilateral donors might therefore wish to assist the Central African authorities to:

(a) Rehabilitate existing military facilities and build new barracks;

(b) Redeploy units to the interior of the country, including through the provision of light duty vehicles;

(c) Recruit, train and equip at least two contingents to make up for the shortage of military personnel since the events of 28 May.

19. Assistance to the Central African Republic in the area of security also concerns the police and gendarmerie which, like the army, must be given substantial support. The shortcomings of these forces in the area of staffing, training, methods of work and respect for the law partly explain the prevailing insecurity in Bangui and in the provinces, as well as the human rights violations that are frequently reported to the Office. If the Central African Republic is to be successful in its efforts to promote the rule of law, then its police force and gendarmerie must have acceptable working conditions. That is why I wish to encourage, in this respect also, all partners concerned to provide special assistance to the authorities:

(a) Through diverse forms of logistical support (teaching equipment and miscellaneous materials for training schools; rehabilitation of infrastructure);

(b) Through financing the initial training of 200 police officers and 200 gendarmes.

20. Owing to the linkage between the restoration of peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and stability in the Central African Republic, I wish to draw the Council's attention to the subregional dimension of the situation in the Central African Republic. That is why I have requested my representatives in Kinshasa and Bangui to continue to work closely together by exchanging information, and taking joint and any other initiatives likely to promote the restoration of peace and security in this part of the continent.

21. Assistance should also be provided to the media of the Central African Republic. Both the public- and private-sector media suffer from a crucial lack of resources, which considerably hampers their vital role in a democratic system. Specifically, the training programmes already being implemented by BONUCA should be strengthened through logistical support from bilateral and multilateral partners aimed at enabling the Central African media to carry out their tasks properly.

B. Strengthening of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic

22. In requesting me to submit recommendations to it, the Council asked me to pay particular attention to the strengthening of BONUCA. Due to the prevailing situation in the country since the attempted coup d'état, consideration needs to be given to strengthening the mandate of the Office in order to enhance its effectiveness and the visibility of its activities by increasing its resources and capabilities, strengthening its administrative capacities and making available to

the Office a level of resources commensurate with its revised mandate.

23. With regard to the strengthening of its activities, the Office, in cooperation with agencies of the United Nations system in the country, will pursue its overall mission of peace-building. In that regard, and in the light of recent events, it will focus on:

(a) Bringing about political dialogue and national reconciliation;

(b) Monitoring the security situation;

(c) Ensuring respect for and the promotion of human rights;

(d) Providing political support for the mobilization of resources with a view to the economic reconstruction of the country.

24. The lack of political dialogue created a situation of permanent tension which was aggravated by the attempted coup d'état. In that regard, the Office should play a more active role in efforts to bring the ruling majority and the opposition closer together with a view to strengthening democratic institutions.

25. As a result of the climate of insecurity in the capital and elsewhere in the country, as well as other indicators of instability, the activities of BONUCA should be reviewed and strengthened in order to enable it to have a genuine early-warning capacity. Moreover, the Office will play a catalytic role in the collection of arms, restructuring of the army and training of military personnel alongside other agencies of the system, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which will be responsible for implementing the redeployment plan.

26. The attempted coup d'état adversely affected the human rights situation. There have been constant reports to the Office of serious violations of human rights, including violations of the right to life. The flood of requests received by the human rights section during and after the events of 28 May sharply highlighted the limited resources of BONUCA in the area of human rights monitoring and investigation of individual cases. In that regard, the strengthening of the Office's mandate should lead to strengthening of its investigation and training activities and to the extension of these activities within the country and assistance to the Central African judicial system and assistance from the United Nations system and other partners. In this regard, the human and financial resources of the Office should be considerably increased. The budget of BONUCA for next year, which I will be presenting to the General Assembly, will reflect this increase.

27. As far as support for the economic recovery of the Central African Republic is concerned, the Council stressed in the statement by its President dated 17 July 2001 the crucial importance of poverty eradication and the need for an enhanced international effort to help in the recovery of the Central African Republic. The role of BONUCA in this context will consist of pursuing, together with the resident coordinator of the United Nations system, efforts to mobilize resources. In that regard, the relations of the Office with the representatives of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank should be more interactive, especially with respect to institutional support for public administration and the Central African financial departments.

28. In the light of these proposals, I wish to propose to the Council that the mandate of BONUCA be strengthened. The principal mission of the Office will be to support the efforts of the authorities and of other sectors of Central African society to achieve national reconciliation and create a political environment that is conducive to peace and development. To this end, its activities will be aimed at promoting political dialogue and cooperation between Government authorities and civil society with a view to strengthening the nation's democratic institutions. The Office will also advise and provide technical assistance to the Government in the areas of security and restructuring of the defence forces. With the assistance of other agencies of the United Nations system, it will also play an active role in promoting disarmament. In addition, it will pay special attention to the human rights situation and, lastly, take appropriate initiatives and provide every possible political assistance to other initiatives for mobilizing the resources needed to achieve economic recovery and combat poverty.

29. In the light of the foregoing and within the framework of a global peace-building strategy adopted by the agencies of the United Nations system represented in the Central African Republic, I propose that the mandate of BONUCA, as set out in the letter dated 3 December 1999 from the Secretary-General addressed to the Security Council (S/1999/1235) and

the statement by the President of the Security Council dated 10 February 2000 (S/PRST/2000/5), should be:

(a) At the political level, to:

(i) Monitor the political situation in the country;

(ii) Support initiatives and efforts aimed at strengthening national unity and promoting national reconciliation and, to this end, provide the necessary support for the effective implementation of the provisions of the 1998 National Reconciliation Pact and the effective functioning of the Monitoring and Arbitration Committee;

(iii) Together with the Government, political parties and civil society, work towards the strengthening of democratic institutions and, to this end, take such steps as are needed to advance the democratic process in the Central African Republic;

(iv) Contribute to the political and social dialogue and, to this end, use its good offices, offer its services as a mediator, if necessary, and strengthen national capacities in the area of the prevention and peaceful settlement of disputes.

(b) In the area of security, to:

(i) Monitor the military and security situation in the country;

(ii) Support any initiative to promote the restructuring of the defence and security forces and to support the national development and redeployment plan;

(iii) With the assistance of other agencies of the United Nations system, promote the implementation of an effective arms-collection programme;

(iv) Implement, for the benefit of the armed forces, a programme of education for a culture of peace and respect for the institutions of the Republic;

(v) Contribute to the mobilization of the external resources needed for the restructuring of the defence and security forces and for the redeployment of interested military personnel.

(c) In the area of civilian police, to:

(i) Monitor the public security situation in the country;

(ii) Support the efforts of the Government to provide training for the national police and gendarmerie;

(iii) Provide technical assistance to the competent police and gendarmerie authorities in the area of public order and crime control;

(d) In the area of human rights, to:

(i) Monitor the human rights situation through observation, investigation and judicial assistance to victims;

(ii) Contribute to national capacity-building in the area of respect for and promotion of human rights through implementation of human rights education and training programmes targeted to all sectors of society, including law enforcement officers both in the capital and in the interior of the country;

(iii) Support the activities of United Nations agencies and other partners aimed at strengthening the judicial system and the rule of law.

(e) In the area of economic recovery, to:

(i) Provide, within the framework of a global peace-building strategy, political support for the efforts of the Resident Coordinator and United Nations agencies to promote national reconstruction, combat poverty and promote good governance;

(ii) Contribute actively to the international mobilization of political support and the necessary resources for the implementation of the social and economic programmes agreed upon with the Bretton Woods institutions.

30. Should the members of the Council approve these new tasks and the proposals made for strengthening BONUCA, I suggest that the mandate of the Support Office be extended for an additional year. The current mandate will expire on 31 December 2001. Unless the Council requests otherwise, I will continue to keep its members informed by submitting every six months a report on developments in the situation in the Central African Republic, in accordance with the statement by

the President of the Council dated 10 February 2000 (S/PRST/2000/5). The next report on the activities of BONUCA will be submitted to the Security Council in December 2001.